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Letter dated 4 June 2008 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit a press release of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation dated 3 June 2008 on the issue of participation of Russian military personnel in the rehabilitation of the railway infrastructure of Abkhazia, Georgia (see annex).

I should be grateful if the present letter and its annex were to be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Vitaly I. **Churkin**

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Annex to the letter dated 4 June 2008 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

[Original: Russian]

The participation of Russian military personnel in the rehabilitation of Abkhazia's railway infrastructure

3 June 2008

A new wave of anti-Russian clamour has arisen in Georgia. This time, the pretext chosen is the dispatch to Abkhazia of a Russian railway troop unit, outfitted with the necessary equipment (a special train with a system for full-scale railway conditioning) to repair the Sukhumi-Ochamchira section of the railway track. The exclusively humanitarian nature of this action has already been stressed in the announcements of the Russian authorities and statements of the Abkhaz side, which had invited the Russian railway personnel. It has been particularly emphasized that the military engineers are completely unarmed. Their tasks have been clearly formulated: to replace the cross ties, improve the state of the track, and repair the railway bridges over the Kodor and Mokva mountain rivers. Approximate targets for completion of the work have been set: from two to four months.

We believe it necessary to stress that the rehabilitation of the railway infrastructure in the territory of Abkhazia is fully in line with the Russian-Georgian accords. The negotiating process on this vitally important problem for the entire region was launched after a meeting of the Russian and Georgian Presidents at Sochi in March 2003, following which a working group on the issues of restoring rail connections through Abkhazia was set up. Among the positive results is a joint inspection of the Abkhaz section of the railway which has been carried out. After the December 2005 meeting of the Russian-Georgian Intergovernmental Commission on Trade and Economic Cooperation, the sides embarked in earnest on the task of creating an international consortium for restoring train traffic through Abkhazia. This work was suspended after Georgian troops were brought into the upper part of the Kodori gorge in the summer of 2006, in violation of the international agreements.

It is obvious that the rehabilitation work being carried out by Russian military engineers not only corresponds to the aspirations of the people of Abkhazia, who for many long years now have been unable to achieve their inalienable right to a decent life because of the devastation left over from the Georgian-Abkhaz war, but would also indisputably serve the interests of the entire Caucasian region, including, of course, Georgia. It would therefore be a good thing if Georgian politicians could move on from meaningless invocations of a threat of annexation and intervention to practical steps for strengthening trust, the way to which lies through constructive and mutually advantageous cooperation.